



## How can you help?

Here are a few simple things we can all do for sage-grouse:

Attend a SWOG meeting to learn more about the Working Group and the grouse.

If you wish to observe the birds strutting in the spring, watch quietly from cars at a safe distance.

Stay on established roads and trails and leave sites as they were found.

Keep cats and dogs under control and away from the birds.

The following participate in the San Juan County Gunnison Sage-Grouse Working Group:

Local landowners, the San Juan County Commission, USU Extension Service, USU College of Natural Resources, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, USDA Wildlife Services, Farm Services Agency, Clark H. Berryman Institute.

With the combined efforts of local citizens, public resource agencies, and others the Working Group hopes to reverse the downward trend of sage-grouse populations. Grassroots efforts, like this one, have been successful in minimizing the threat of federal listing for other species. SWOG is confident that this grassroots initiative will ensure the continued economic and cultural vitality of San Juan County and the revival of a healthy, sustaining Gunnison Sage-Grouse population for many generations to come.

For more information about Gunnison Sage-Grouse or SWOG's activities, please contact:

Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (801) 538-4786

USU College of Natural Resources (435) 797-3975

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## The Gunnison Sage-Grouse in Utah:



### San Juan County's Community-Based Species Conservation Initiative



### A flash of white, a glimpse of yellow, the toss of feathers—

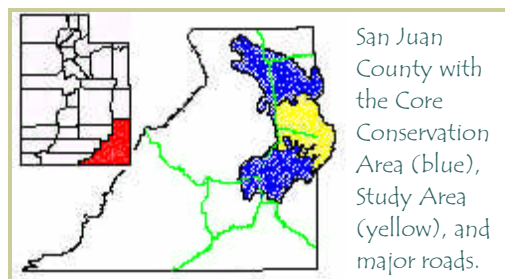
In the early dawn light this male Gunnison Sage-Grouse performs his timeless display. He stands in an opening in the sagebrush flats popping his air sacs and tossing the “pony tail” feathers on his head for an attentive female. Each year, male sage-grouse congregate on these lek sites, or strutting grounds, to best each other for the attention of females. The females, attracted by the sounds and the dance, mingle through the displaying birds. From here, they will go to build a nest in the sagebrush where they will wait patiently for the next generation to arrive.

## Gunnison Sage-Grouse

once inhabited 5 western states. On the decline since the 1950's, today they occupy only a limited area in southwest Colorado and southeastern Utah. San Juan County is the only county in Utah where a Gunnison Sage-Grouse population is known to occur.

Gunnison Sage-Grouse are recognized as a different species of sage-grouse because of their unique feather patterns, mating calls, smaller size, and genetic makeup.

The San Juan County Gunnison Sage-Grouse Working Group (SWOG) was formed in 1996 to identify and implement community-based conservation strategies to try



and prevent the species from being listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. Gunnison Sage-Grouse depend heavily on private lands for habitat so, from the beginning, SWOG has sought local citizen involvement. SWOG consists of private landowners, local citizens, public land management agencies, and private conservation groups.



A CRP field overlooking the La Sal Mountains. Grouse need the succulent forb food source found in these fields.

## A Plan For Action

In the fall of 2001 SWOG finalized the Gunnison Sage-Grouse Conservation Plan for San Juan County. The plan provides guidelines for habitat improvement and monitoring of conservation strategies that will benefit both the grouse and the local community.

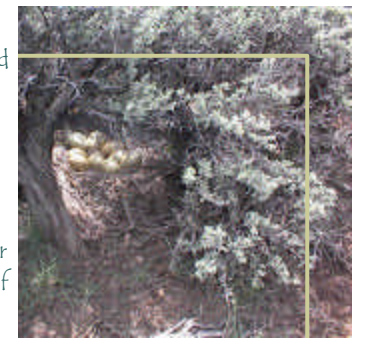
## What's Good For Landowners is Good For Sage-Grouse

In the late 1980s many landowners in San Juan County enrolled their lands in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Through CRP, landowners can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource-conserving covers on eligible farmland.

When CRP contracts expired in 1995, new national eligibility requirements prevented re-enrollment of many lands in the county. SWOG worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to have San Juan County designated as a state conservation priority area under CRP because of the Gunnison Sage-Grouse. This designation meant that land considered critical to grouse didn't have to meet the new erodibility index requirements. Lands with the priority conservation area designation had to be seeded with mixtures and practices developed jointly by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and the Farm Services Agency. Additionally, the agencies contributed to the cost-sharing.

As a result of SWOG's actions, many otherwise ineligible acres of farmland were seeded with plants beneficial to wildlife and over \$1,000,000 in annual income was generated for participating landowners.

The nest of a radio-collared hen. Researchers were able to locate her nest site and then monitor the survival of her chicks.



## What Are We Doing?

Little is known about Gunnison Sage-Grouse in San Juan County. SWOG has initiated a long-term research project on the sage-grouse. SWOG will use this information to design and implement future management strategies. The objectives of the project are to:

- ? Determine seasonal habitat use with special attention to the use of CRP by grouse.
- ? Evaluate success of nests and survival of chicks and adults.
- ? Determine sources of mortality.
- ? Monitor population fluctuations.

